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RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 0755  
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SUBJECT: TWO DPRK DIPLOMATS ARRESTED IN SWEDEN FOR SMUGGLING

¶1. On November 20, all Swedish media reported that two North Korean diplomats - a man and a woman in their fifties - were arrested by Swedish customs officers for attempting to smuggle 230,000 cigarettes by ferry from Mariehamn, Finland. The couple protested and tried to claim diplomatic immunity, but both were accredited to Russia, not Sweden. They were taken into custody in Stockholm. Legal proceedings are scheduled to start before November 27. Smuggling crimes can carry penalties of six months to six years in prison.

¶2. A contact at the Swedish Customs told Post FSN that the cigarettes were packaged as the American brand "L&M," the red package (full flavored), with Russian warning text. L&M are produced by the Virginia-based Altria Group, Inc. (formerly Philip Morris Companies, Inc.). There is no information available to Post as to whether the cigarettes are real or counterfeit.

¶3. The DPRK Embassy in Stockholm denies any knowledge of the incident. However, the tabloid "Expressen" reported that two representatives from the DPRK Embassy, a man and a woman, visited the arrested couple on November 19. The man became upset when the tabloid photographer took his picture.

¶4. POST NOTE: DPRK diplomats have been involved in smuggling in Sweden before. In 1976, North Korea's ambassador was declared "persona non grata" along with six other diplomats.

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